

# **POLICY BULLETIN CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS**

**NSLP 17-08**

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**SUBJECT: Eligibility Manual Changes**

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The *Eligibility Manual for School Meals* was issued in January, 2008. It contains information which must be followed in the processing and approval of free and reduced-price applications and verification. Please assure those involved in approving the applications know about the following changes (page numbers refer to where the information may be found in the *Eligibility Manual*):

**Foster Children:** In lieu of applications, a list may be accepted from the court or the agency responsible for the placement of foster children. The list must provide the child's name, personal income (if any) or an indication they have no income, the child's address and be signed by the appropriate official. Residential Child Care Institutions may use a documentation sheet for all children residing in the RCCI. The list must contain the child's name and personal income, be signed by the appropriate official and provide the official's title and contact information (pg. 10).

**Use of Applications for Other Purposes:** Schools wishing to require income information from all households with enrolled children must secure that income information through means other than the household's application for free or reduced-price meal benefits (pg. 12).

**Carryover of Previous Year's Eligibility:** Schools must carryover the eligibility status from the previous year for all children with a prior year eligibility for 30 days. Schools cannot establish a shorter time frame for carryover of benefits (once a new year application is received, the school has 10 working days to process the new year application) (pg. 15-16).

**When the Application Indicates Different Types of Eligibility:** The school must have a method to process different eligibility statuses within the same application (pg. 17).

**Income Received at Different Intervals:** Do not round the values resulting from each conversion (assure computer programs take cents into account and do not round). Schools cannot use conversion factors. Software used must reflect this policy (pg. 19).

**Household Members Income:** Each household member must show income amounts or zero income or have the box checked to indicate zero income (pg. 19).

**Households That Fail to Apply:** Local school officials may complete an application for a child known to be eligible if the household fails to apply. The school must complete the application based on the best household size and income information. The source of the information must be noted on the application available. These applications are excluded from verification. Households must be notified that the child has been certified to receive free or reduced-price benefits (pg. 22).

**Updating Records for Changes during the School Year:** If any change is made after the initial approval for the current school year, the school official must note the change; write the date of the change on the application; implement the change by updating rosters (or other methods used at

the point of service). When a child transfers to another school within a district, the date of the transfer must be noted on the application (pg. 24).

Computerized Operation: The determining official may sign or initial and date a batch of applications. The computer system should be able to capture the original date of approval, the basis for determination and update the status of applications to account for transfers, withdrawals, terminations and other changes (Q7, pg. 27).

Emancipated Child: An emancipated child who lives alone or as a member of a household with no adult household members must sign his/her own application. No Social Security Number is required for the emancipated child (Q1, pg. 27).

Household Members: A child and his mother are living with her sister's family because they were evicted. The child was determined homeless by the liaison and is therefore categorically eligible for free meals. Can the sister count the child and his mother in her household? Yes, if they are part of the same economic unit (Q6, pg. 28).

Income Exclusions: Child's Income – Infrequent earnings, such as income from occasional babysitting or mowing lawns, are not counted as income and should not be listed on the application (pg. 36).

Verification: Directions for the verification process are outlined in Part 8 of the *Manual*. All schools must follow this procedure starting with the 2008-09 year.

Household Verification: The household must submit Social Security Numbers for everyone listed on an income application (pg. 75).

Household Response: If the household indicates, verbally or in writing, that it no longer wishes to receive free or reduced price benefits, verification is considered complete when the notice of adverse action is sent (pg. 75).

Benefits During an Appeal: When a household does not appeal a reduction or termination of benefits during the 10 calendar days advance notice period, or the hearing official rules that benefits must be reduced, the actual reduction or termination of benefits must take place no later than 10 operating days after the 10 calendar day advance notice period, or 10 operating days after the decision by the hearing official (pg. 77).

Appendix C: Disclosure of Free & Reduced Price Information: A sample agreement is included which should be used whenever a school has determined free and reduced-price eligibility information may be disclosed to another agency (pg. 89).

Appendix D: Disclosure Chart by What May be Released: Lists the type of information and the kind of notification and consent required for free and reduced-price eligibility information disclosure (pg. 94).

Appendix E: Electronic Transactions: This section details the requirements for the use of electronic information pg. 95).

If your staff sees other things in the new *Manual* which they believe to be different from old practices, please call them to our attention.